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## *The Graying of Rural America*

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"The Graying of Rural  
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### **The U.S. population is**

aging, and the growth in the number of older persons will have a significant impact on social and policy issues.

Throughout the Nation, rural areas generally have a higher proportion of older persons in their total population than urban areas—in 1998, the elderly constituted 15 percent of the rural population and 12 percent of the urban population. Rural areas are aging rapidly as a result of aging-in-place, out-migration of young adults, and in-migration of older persons from metropolitan areas, straining community resources to provide needed services. Recent policy changes affecting rural health care delivery will have a major impact on rural areas that are more limited in their health care services and facilities.

This article finds that the aging of the population has wide-ranging consequences for rural communities. Rural areas are diverse in terms of their socioeconomic conditions. Rural retirement areas are benefiting from growth, as in-migrating retirees boost the tax base and help sustain local businesses. On the other hand, farming- and mining-dependent rural areas have been losing younger working-age persons and experiencing declining populations and tax bases. The remaining older population has become an ever-increasing proportion of the population, increasing demands for medical and social services and long-term care. Policies and programs for the older population must take into account these rural differences.

